

**Transcript of First Officer of Ehime Maru**  
**Honolulu, HI.**  
**February 12, 2001**  
**Transcribed by Ted White**  
**June 28, 2001**

Mr. Roth-Roffy: We are starting the interview of the Chief Officer of the fishing vessel. It is Monday evening, February 12<sup>th</sup> at 1830. We are investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board and we are conducting a safety investigation of the accident. Please describe everything that happened from the time you left the dock until you got in the life raft, in as much detail as possible.

Interpreter: His station was forward. When the pilot left, his responsibility was to lash the anchor. After the pilot departed, they had some complications securing the anchor. They were out there for about an hour. After that, they proceeded aft. Then it was time to eat and they proceeded to the mess. The circle indication is the table he sat at. He finished eating and went upstairs to his stateroom, which is indicated by the circle. When he was in his stateroom he saw that it was 1220 – 1320 with the time change. He was finished and went to the washroom to wash his hands and take a shower. At that time the second engineer was brushing his teeth in the washroom. They had a conversation as friends. About 1330 – 1340 is when he felt the shock. He knew that because of seeing the clock in his stateroom at 1320. The first one hit and he wondered “what was that?” He looked outside and that’s when he felt the second jolt. When he looked outside he noticed the ship was completely stopped. He realized that this wasn’t normal, that something was very, very wrong. So he decided to go out the passage out through the starboard doors and walked onto the main deck on the starboard side. Proceeded to go up the stairs to inside the bridge. He saw the submarine on the port quarter, but couldn’t tell which way it was going initially. He realized the lights were off when he was on the bridge. He saw the captain trying to make a radio call but realized the power was out. That’s when he decided to go back down the stairs to stateroom to grab his life jackets. When he went down to his stateroom he was kind of in a state of panic, and at that time he noticed the water was up to his ankles. He just decided to go back up to the bridge again, realizing there were 7-8 life jackets on the bridge. He gave one life jacket to the Captain, he gave another to another crewman (he doesn’t remember who it was). It’s in the chart room. One person came in (a seaman) and got the four remaining life jackets for the personnel who were mustered on the starboard bridge wing. During emergencies they muster behind the chartroom. Some of the people had their own and the sailor gave them to those that didn’t. By the time he put on his life jacket the water was up to his knees. The second officer brought his own life jacket and put it on. At that point the water rising rapidly. He doesn’t know who was around him any more except the second officer. They decided together to not jump off the vessel but basically, to just go into the water. They swam away forward and away from the ship. After about 5 meters they thought it was safe. His legs started getting tired. He was floating in his life jacket, resting his legs. He was floating with his head up looking at the vessel. At about a 45 – 50 degree angle the vessel just sank straight in at that angle. He wasn’t thinking about getting saved or rescued at that point. He noticed the life rafts just started coming up. Because they were forward of

the vessel they weren't exposed to the diesel fuel at all. He noticed another oiler behind him and he asked if he was OK and he responded that he was fine. He noticed a life raft next to him. Kimora – the oiler – dragged him to the raft. The sailor Hota was already in the raft and Kimora was pushing him and Hota was pulling him at the same time into the life raft. That's how he got into the raft. The life jacket was tight on him so he took it off and felt better. There were about 11 people in the raft, and 3-4 rafts put together. He was on the second life raft. One of the rafts line broke and it floated away. Kimora and several others crawled to the other raft. There were about 9 in the other raft. The Captain was in his raft and several others. (*names several*) There may have been only 8 in his raft. They got the oars out. Some had throats that were hurting and feeling sick, eyes hurting. Used water from emergency kits to wash out eyes and throats, then felt better. That's when he saw the submarine. He saw the submarines house with a ladder coming down. He saw about 3 people. They didn't throw any lines, they weren't doing anything. They were just watching us. Everybody in the life raft was thinking why don't they do anything. After about 30 minutes to an hour is when he noticed an airplane flying around. Then he saw the RHIB come in. One of the life rafts was upside down, couldn't really confirm how many there were. The captain was wondering who was on the other ones. Then the Coast Guard vessel came and Kmajo in other raft was hurt. The Coast Guard put Kmajo in the boat and then orderly the students went on board. We all got on the boat. He thinks 26 people were counted but it was too hard to count. With the Captain the Coast Guard looked in all the rafts to see if anybody was left. Kmajo was the most hurt. They started going back to shore, and that's it. When they got to the station they took a shower and washed up.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: I have some follow-up questions. You mentioned you were on the bow with some complication on the anchor windlass. What was the nature of that complication?

Interpreter: It wasn't a complication, but it was rough so it took a little longer.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: What were the sea conditions? Could he estimate wave height?

Interpreter: Heavy rolls and they were taking water over them. Even when they slowed down they were taking waves. He estimates maybe 2 meters.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Does he know what the wind speed was?

Interpreter: About 3 on beauford scale. About 5 meters/second.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Does he remember which direction the wind was coming from?

Interpreter: From the South/southeast. More south than East.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Where was he when the ship left dock? He station was the anchor windlass?

Interpreter: He was just talking with the captain on the transceiver.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: What speed was the vessel going when they had the problem with the waves? And what speed did they slow down to and what time was that.

Interpreter: They departed around 1200. About 1300 is when they increased the speed. He clarified that they didn't drop speed. What they did was 5 knots during the transit. They were at that speed as they were departing and that was the speed they were at while securing the anchor. They wouldn't speed up until they secured the anchor. At about 1 hour. They departed at 1200, the transit from the pier took around 10-15 minutes. They disembarked the pilot at hotel buoy. For an additional 45 minutes they were still doing about 5 knots, and that's when they increased the speed.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Did you see any other ships when you were up on the bow?

Interpreter: No, besides the pilot boat.

[Gap in tape]

Mr. Roth-Roffy: When he first heard the shock, where was he located?

Interpreter: He was in the washroom.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: When he went to the bridge, at what angle did he see the submarine?

Interpreter: If this was the vessel... He's placing the pen on the port side at about 45 degrees angle from the stern of the vessel.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: How much of the submarine was visible. How much of the hull could he see?

Interpreter: The house, he saw the house.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Could he see the hull?

Interpreter: Maybe, maybe not. He wasn't paying attention to that.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: That's all I have for now. I will turn over questioning to Mr. Woody.

Mr. Woody: How old are you?

Interpreter: 58

Mr. Woody: What is your weight and height?

Interpreter: 61 KG and about 161 cm.

Mr. Woody: What is your maritime experience – schools, licenses, etc.

Interpreter: Started at about 21, has about 37 years on vessels.

Mr. Woody: What kind of vessels have you served in?

Interpreter: In the Ehime Maru about 25 years. In tuna boats about 10 years. And 2 years on cargo vessels.

Mr. Woody: How many Ehime Maru's?

Interpreter: This is the third one he has served on. He started on the second one. There have been four total.

Mr. Woody: What license do you hold?

Interpreter: Third Tier.

Mr. Woody: How long have you been Chief Officer?

Interpreter: About 5 years. Before that he was second officer, and before that the captain now was chief officer. When the captain moved up so did he.

Mr. Woody: How long have you been on present Ehime Maru?

Interpreter: Since it was new.

Mr. Woody: What watches do you stand on the vessel?

Interpreter: Seven sections, three hours, two people, the fourth one the captain. During maneuvering the Captain on watch.

Mr. Woody: Who is on watch with you?

Interpreter: The Captain and Chief Officer stand watch alone. The second officer stands with another sailor. The rest of them stand two person watches.

Mr. Woody: That's three of the watches. Who stands the other watches?

Interpreter: The quartermaster, Murai the sailor, Hota the boatswain, and Hama and Okama. [other names unintelligible].

Mr. Woody: Please write down the names or positions of the watches. [they did]

Mr. Woody: What type of education did you have?

Interpreter: Junior High.

Mr. Woody: How would you characterize your health?

Interpreter: Good.

Mr. Woody: Do you take any medication?

Interpreter: No prescription medications.

Mr. Woody: Do you sleep well?

Interpreter: Yes.

Mr. Woody: How do you spend your off-watch time?

Interpreter: About 7 hours off when fishing. About 4 hours to do the set. Then the take-in is about 12-13 hours. About three hours between taking in lines and the next set. When they are fishing, he sleeps when they finish taking in lines to when they start drifting – finish with the set. That's about 7 hours. [*different voices giving different times outlining 24 hour cycle*] They start setting around 6, about 10 they finish, drifting until about 1400 and then they start taking in. 2-3 in morning is when they finish taking in and then they rest. And then they repeat cycle.

Mr. Woody: That's all the questions I have, Thank you.

Mr. White: I have 1 or 2 questions about the emergency equipment. Who activated the EPIRB?

Interpreter: The Captain ordered the Chief Radio Officer.

Mr. White: does he know how to swim?

Interpreter: Yes.

Mr. White: Did he inflate his life jacket or did it automatically inflate?

Interpreter: Once he hit the water it automatically inflated. It was very tight. It was hard to swim with – like doing dog paddle.

Mr. White: If he had not had life jacket, would he have been able to stay afloat and swim to the raft?

Interpreter: Yes, it would have been easier.

Mr. White: Did he feel like he was being pulled down by the ship?

Interpreter: He doesn't recall it.

[*gap in tape*]

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Was the ship's radar in operation while they left port and were transiting?

Interpreter: Yes.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Which radar was operating?

Interpreter: The top one. When they were leaving they both were spinning.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Does the vessel operate year round?

Interpreter: Yes.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: What is his vacation schedule? How many months or weeks does he work?

Interpreter: About 1 month. The trips are about 74 days with month in between. He has 2 ½ months at sea, then 1 ½ months off. 3 cycles per year.

Mr. Roth-Roffy: That's all we have. Thank you for your time. The time is now 1948.